

Chapter 2 The 1860s to the 1940s

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The actual term, homosexuality, comes from the late 18th century, when it was first used. The word itself is a unitary construct that is derived from the Greek term “homos” or same. Sexual is related to the Medieval Latin word “sexualis” Thus making reference to physical sexual acts with members of the same sex or gender, i.e. male with male, or female with female. It is quite interesting that different sources trace the origins of this word to a medical background or a criminal code use. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs first wrote about the concept of homosexuality in 1864, and Karoly Maria Kertbeny coined the actual word in 1869. The word “homosexual” was coined and used in what may be seen as a struggle for “homosexual rights” in Germany to eliminate state proscriptions against homosexual practices. The word was first used by homosexuals themselves, and then by the medical community to describe what they were seeing in individuals. Homosexuality originated not as a medical term, but rather as a neutral, legal, scientific term for the emancipation of homosexuals. Those who coined and first used the term “homosexual” were lawyers and writers. They saw homosexuality as inborn, natural and congenital. The medical community began using a “medical model” of homosexuality, which emphasized “perversion, sickness and deficiency”. In was during this same time period that a new field of study began, “sexology” to study sexuality and specifically homosexuality. Beginning in the 1860s homosexuals advocating for legal rights, and sexologists espoused the idea to see homosexuality not as a sin or a crime, but to recast it primarily in medical terms.

“Ulrich’s goal was to free people like himself from the legal, religious, and social condemnation of homosexual acts as unnatural. For this, he invented a new terminology that would refer to the nature of the individual, and not to the acts performed.” (Kennedy, “Karl Heinrichs Ulrichs: First Theorist of Homosexuality,” p. 30 in Science and Homosexualities, editor Vernon A. Rosario)

“The study of homosexuality began in Germany, where it was intertwined with the struggle to eliminate state proscriptions against homosexual practices.” (Dean, Sexuality and

[Larry Houston](#)

[\[mailto:larryhouston@bnc\]](mailto:larryhouston@bnc)

[Chapter 7 A](#)

[Homosexual Agenda?](#)

[\[spip.php?article78\]](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Essentialism or Social Constructionism](#)

[\[spip.php?article85\]](#)

[Chapter 8 Ten Percent](#)

[Homosexual Myth](#)

[\[spip.php?article79\]](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Homosexual Identity Formation](#)

[\[spip.php?article84\]](#)

[Chapter Six Types of Homosexualities/ Gay and Lesbian](#)

[Homosexual Identity](#)

[\[spip.php?article64\]](#)

In the same section

[Chapter 1 Who or What](#)

[\[spip.php?article87\]](#)

[Chapter 4 World War II to the 1960s](#)

[\[spip.php?article89\]](#)

[Chapter 9 Gay Teen Suicide Myth](#)

[\[spip.php?article80\]](#)

[Chapter 3 Alfred Kinsey](#)

[\[spip.php?article77\]](#)

[Chapter 8 Ten Percent](#)

[Homosexual Myth](#)

[\[spip.php?article79\]](#)

[Chapter 6 Assimilation or Liberation](#)

[\[spip.php?article83\]](#)

[Chapter 10 Homophobia Myth](#)

[\[spip.php?article81\]](#)

[Chapter 11 Homosexual Parenting Myth](#)

[\[spip.php?article82\]](#)

Modern Western Culture, p. 22)

“Sexology’s legacy for homosexual rights was a mixed bag. On the one hand, it offered promise in terms of naturalizing homosexuality as a biologically based or developmentally determined variation of human sexuality. It therefore followed that homosexuals should be accorded equal rights. Indeed, medical specialists generally supported homosexual rights activists in campaigning for repeal of penal laws against homosexuality. On the other hand, biologizing and pathologizing homosexuality established a distinct medical classification, akin to categorization of physical and mental diseases. And medical nosologies were created to identify disease entities that, once differentiated, would lead to appropriate treatment. . . . Moreover, biological and psychological reductionism masked the cultural, social, and historical contexts of homosexuality. . . . The sexological discovery of homosexuality was both a response to and a source of constructing gay and lesbian identities. Self-defined homosexual men and woman existed before the sexologist labeled them. In fact, physicians appropriated the label “homosexuality” put forth by Kertbeny in 1869. The sexologists learned about homosexuality from what they observed in their patients and read about in police reports, judicial proceedings, and newspaper accounts. The medical classification, in turn, produced effects on the people who were objects of inquiry. The very act of classification reinforced the grassroots sense of group identity among those who were part of the growing gay and lesbian communities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only did the work of the sexologists reify existing identities and cultural patterns, but it also served as sources for redefinition and resistance. Sexual subjects used the scientific discourse for their own purposes.” (Minton, *Departing From Deviance* p.13)

“The terms homosexual and homosexuality did not exist until the second half of the 1860s when they first appeared in Central Europe. They were invented by a German-Hungarian publicist and translator who opposed German sodomy laws, K. M. Benkert.

Writing under the noble name of his family, Karoly Maria Kertbeny, he first used the term homosexual in private correspondence in 1868 and in two anonymous German pamphlets in 1869 (Herzer, 1985). He invented this term to distinguish those who participated in same-gender sexual behavior from those who engaged in male-female sexual behavior. He associated “homosexuality” with sickness and deviance but not with sin or criminal behavior (Bullough, 1994; Donovan, 1992). Kertbeny also invented the term heterosexuality in 1869 (Herzer, 1985). The contrasting pair of words, heterosexual and homosexual, were not popularized, however, until the 1880s. Krafft-Ebing (1892) adopted and popularized the term homosexual. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, both terms moved from German to other European languages (Dynes, 1990c). They were introduced into the English language in 1897 (Bardis, 1980). In the early years of the twentieth century, the popularity of the term homosexual escalated through its use by Havelock Ellis (1942) and Magnus Hirschfeld (1948).” (Hunter, Shannon, Knox, and Martin, *Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youths and Adults*, p. 7)

• Karl Heinrich Ulrichs

One gay author, Gilbert Herdt in his book, *Same Sex, Different Cultures*, credits the concept of homosexuality to a German medical doctor, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895) in 1869, where it was discussed within a series of books he wrote. His account disagrees with most other authors who generally agree on the following account. Ulrichs was an early theorist and activist for legal and social rights of homosexual persons. He was the first person to write about the concept of homosexuality and has been called “the grandfather of gay liberation”. He was a German lawyer, writer and a

homosexual himself. Ulrichs' writing under his own name and the pseudonym, Numa Numantius, generated a series of five pamphlets about homosexuality, "Researches Into the Riddle of Love Between Men," beginning in 1865. He eventually expanded them into twelve pamphlets by 1879. These were first written to argue against state proscriptions towards homosexual practices in the emerging country of Germany. Ulrichs wrote interpreting homosexuality in a naturalistic manner. It was explained to be a benign, inborn anomaly, linked to an organic congenital predisposition or to evolutionary factors. He first located this trait in the brain, and in his later writings in the testicles. Homosexuality was a condition of inborn sexual inversion, which caused homosexuals to be neither truly male nor female, but to have characteristics of the opposite sex. For the homosexual man, he had a "feminine soul or mentality confined within a masculine body." Ulrichs used the nomenclature of a "third sex" which he called "urning", and he derived this term from an illusion to Uranus in Plato's Symposium. In his life Ulrichs served in the government as a lawyer, but quit under mysterious circumstances. He was also imprisoned for his out spoken views on homosexuality. Ulrichs eventually left his native country of Germany and spent the last fifteen years of his life in Italy. Although Ulrichs was unable to gain much support for his theory, he did contribute to the growing perception in the nineteenth century of the homosexual as a distinctive type of person. He died a poor broken man, virtually forgotten by his peers in the struggle for the emancipation for homosexuals.

"The word homosexuality did not exist prior to 1869, when it appeared in a pamphlet that took the form of an open letter to the German minister of justice (the German word is homosexualitat). A new penal code for the North German Federation was being drafted, and a debate had arisen over whether to retain the section of the Prussian criminal code which made sexual contact between persons of the same gender a crime. The pamphlet's author, Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824-82), was one of several writers and jurists who were beginning to develop the concept of sexual orientation. This idea-that some individuals' sexual attraction for members of the same sex was an inherent and an unchanging aspect of their personality -was radically new. Thousands of years of record history and the rise and fall of sophisticated and complex societies occurred before homosexuality existed as a word or even as an idea." (Monimore, A Natural History of Homosexuality, p.3)

"Until roughly 1900 the dominant explanation of male homosexuality, proposed by the homosexual lawyer and classicist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in the 1860's, was that homosexual men had a "women's soul enclosed in a male body [anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa] (Hekma, 178)." Ulrichs defined male homosexuality as an inborn trait located in the brain (and in later works, in the testicles). The Berlin psychiatrist Karl Westphal dubbed this phenomenon "sexual inversion" and defined it as a psychopathological condition. This view of male homosexuality was widely influential." (Dean, Sexuality and Modern Western Culture, p. 22)

"In his published writings on homosexuality, Ulrichs posited the existence of a "third sex" whose nature was inborn. The essential point in his theory of homosexuality is the doctrine that the male homosexual has a female psyche, which he summed up in the Latin phrases: anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa (a female psych confined in a male body)" (Kennedy, "Karl Heinrichs Ulrichs: First Theorist of Homosexuality," p. 27 in Science and Homosexualities, editor Vernon A. Rosario)

• Karoly Maria Kertbeny

It was Karoly Maria Kertbeny (1824-1882) who first coined the word “homosexual” in a private draft of a letter to Karl Heinrichs Ulrichs in 1868. Kertbeny was a German-Hungarian writer, translator, and journalist. He bore the surname Karl Maria Benkert until 1847, when he was authorized by the police of his native city of Vienna to use the Hungarian noble name of his family as his sole name, Karoly Maria Kertbeny. In 1869 Kertbeny wrote two pamphlets that were published anonymously, demanding freedom from penal sanctions for homosexual men in Prussia and the Prussia-dominated North German Confederation. It was in these pamphlets that the word “homosexual” was substituted for the word “urning” that Ulrichs had used in 1864. Though Kertbeny closely followed Ulrichs theory of homosexuals being a third-sex, he saw it as a biologically based type of sexual pathology. His chief emphasis for the emancipation of the homosexual was for the modern constitutional state to extend to homosexuals its principle of non-interference in the private life of its citizens. He asserted the right of all human beings to engage in homosexual activity, rather than for exclusive homosexuals to be free of legal hindrances. This was on the basis of the liberal doctrine that the state itself has no right to interfere in such a private matter as sexual behavior. There is little known about his life, but he was suspected to be secretly homosexual. Kertbeny died from syphilis.

“Despite nearly a century and half of study and debate, there still is no universally accepted definition of homosexuality among clinicians and behavioral scientists - let alone a consensus regarding its origins. The idea that it derives from moral degeneracy has long been discounted by scholars, many of whom have argued for the primacy of either biologic or psychosocial influences.” (Bryne and Parsons, *Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised*,” p.228)

• Richard von Krafft-Ebing

Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) is another prominent German sexologist. He was a German Professor of Psychiatry and in 1886 wrote *Psychopathia sexualis*, an encyclopedic compendium of sexual pathologies. Krafft-Ebing subverted Ulrichs theory of homosexuality. Though he too believed homosexuality was inborn, he saw it as an inborn constitutional defect that manifested itself in sex-inverted characteristics and in overall degeneracy. Homosexuals were arrested at a more primitive stage of evolutionary development than normal people, i.e. heterosexuals. Krafft-Ebing thought the sexual instinct was lodged in psychosexual centers of the cerebral cortex and located next to the visual and olfactory centers. So in the homosexual these psychosexual centers were congenitally diseased, and relayed inappropriate messages for sexual instinct. So with Krafft-Ebing the theory for homosexuality went from one of “natural and congenital” to a criminal medical model which emphasized “perversion, sickness, and deficiency.”

“Krafft-Ebing defined homosexuality not as a set of sexual acts but as “the determination of feeling for the same-sex” (Krafft-Ebing 1922, 286), a determination brought about by either genetic or situational factors.” (Brookey, *Reinventing the Male Homosexual*, p. 29)

"In other words, Kraft-Ebing saw homosexuality as a degenerative condition."
(Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual, p.30)

"Although Kraft-Ebing was not a gay rights advocate, his theories of homosexuality are similar to those of Hirschfeld and Ulrichs. He imagined that homosexuality is both a biological and psychological manifestation."
(Brookey, Reinventing the male Homosexual, p.30)

• Magnus Hirschfeld

Another early German leader for the emancipation of homosexuals was Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935). Of the early homosexual rights advocates, Hirschfeld's career and legacy presents in retrospect as many errors and failures to be shunned as achievements to emulate. He was homosexual himself like many of the other early advocates for homosexual rights. His view of homosexuality was similar to that of Ulrichs. Homosexuality was innate and biological in nature. Homosexuals were a third sex, resulting from a hormonal cause. It resulted in a preponderance of the female in the male and the male in the female. Hirschfeld never put forth a coherent scientific explanation of homosexuality and his works were rejected. He helped to organize the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in 1897 and establish the first institute where research and therapy took place.

"He believed that male homosexuals were physically different from male heterosexuals and that these differences were the products of hormones secreted by the gonads (Hirschfeld, 1944). These hormones not only influenced sexual orientation but were also responsible for gender differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals. He imagined homosexuality to be an intermediate gender between the feminine and the masculine. Although male homosexuals had the physical bodies of men, Hirschfeld argued they had the sex drive and emotions of the opposite sex." (Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual, p.28)

"The committee was established on the assumption, which Hirschfeld took from his sexologist predecessors, that homosexuality is biological, the homosexual a type." (Archer, The End of Gay and the death of heterosexuality, p.75)

"Hirschfeld's two ultimate justifications for his organization and his activist tactics and pursuits also bore a striking resemblance to those used in continuing the fight he started. The first was to establish as scientific fact that the homosexual was born, not made, and so was beyond the scope of a legal system that could punish people for what they did, not who they were. The second was to prevent teenage suicide." (Archer, The End of Gay and the death of heterosexuality, p.76)

In 1933 the Nazis burned his works and research. Hirschfeld's legacy was tarnished by serious lapses of professional ethics. He was accused of selling worthless patented medicines. The most serious lapse was the allegations that he extorted money from some famous Germans who had in good faith furnished him with materials revealing the intimate (and incriminating) sides of their lives. Hirschfeld also conducted two polls of high school boys and

male factory workers. The poll of the high school boys resulted in legal troubles for Hirschfeld.

“Though his findings were greatly overshadowed by a lawsuit brought by six students who charged him with obscenity (he was found guilty and made to pay a fine and costs) he managed to conduct the first large-scale gay survey, the scientific technique upon which the gay movement was to continually re-establish its credentials with increasing frequency and specialization over the next century.” (Archer, *The End of Gay and the death of heterosexuality*, p.76)

• **Havelock Ellis**

Outside of Germany, Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) was an early homosexual rights advocate from England. Ellis was medically trained, and the author of a six volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* published from 1897 to 1910. He was the first to study homosexuals outside of prisons, asylums, and clinics. Ellis viewed homosexuality neither as a disease or a crime. Homosexuals suffered from arrested development, and inborn sexual inversion. Homosexuality was the result of a congenital organic variation; individuals had both male and female sexual instincts. The invert lacked the ability to see and feel normal emotional desires toward the opposite sex. Ellis popularized the idea of homosexuality as an inversion, an inborn non-pathological gender anomaly.

“The sexological ‘discovery’ of the homosexual in the late nineteenth century is therefore obviously a crucial moment. It gave a name, an aetiology, and potentially the embryos of an identity. It marked off a special homosexual type of person, with distinctive physiognomy, tastes and potentialities. Did, therefore, the sexologists create the homosexual? This certainly seems to be the position of some historians. Michel Foucault and Lillian Faderman appear at times to argue, in an unusual alliance, that it was the categorisation of the sexologists that made ‘the homosexual’ and ‘the lesbian’ possible. Building on Ulrichs belief that homosexuals were a third sex, a woman’s soul in a man’s body, Westphal was able to invent the ‘contrary sexual feeling’ Ellis the ‘invert’ defined by a congenital anomaly, and Hirschfeld the ‘intermediate sex’; the sexologists definitions, embodied in medical interventions, ‘created’ the homosexual. Until sexology gave them a label, there was only the half-life of an amorphous sense of self. The homosexuality identity as we know it is therefore a production of social categorisation, whose fundamental aim and effect was regulation and control. To name was imprison.” (Weeks, *Sexuality and Its Discontents Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities*, p.92-93)

• **Sigmund Freud**

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the first to challenge the entire construction of a sexual instinct as Ulrichs and others had commonly conceived it. Freud considered homosexuality to be a perversion of the sex drive away from the normal object of desire (i.e. the opposite sex) toward a substitute object, including someone of the same sex. Freud disagreed with Ellis and the other sexologists view of homosexuality by seriously questioning

the idea of gender inversion as well as congenital homosexuality. Instead Freud viewed it as a sexual object choice, and generally regarded homosexuality as a psychogenetically outcome of early childhood experiences. Homosexuality was an arrested psychosexual development and was purely the result of fixation in an infantile stage of sexual development provoked by the action or inaction of the parents. He saw environmental influences rooted in family dynamics such as a seductive mother and a weak father. This resulted in the compulsive quest of the male that was caused by their restless flight from the female. Homosexuality no longer incorporated the broad meaning of sex-role deviation; instead it referred specifically to aberrant sexual behavior. Homosexuality was acquired and pathological. Because it was not until between the two world wars that Freud's work would have its greatest impact, gender inversion remained the dominant theory of homosexuality for many years to come.

“Only Freud, with whom Ellis disagreed with, seriously questioned the paradigm of gender inversion (as well as congenital homosexuality) by distinguishing between sexual object and aim. Freud, in contrast to the medical men - Moll, Bloch, and others - who influenced his work, challenged the entire construction of a “sexual instinct” as it had been commonly conceived since Kraft-Ebing. In arguing that relation between object and aim was the outcome of the struggle he would later term the Oedipus complex, Freud assumed that reproductive heterosexuality was not a natural instinct: instead, it was the product of a successful psychic struggle in which one identified with (and introjected) the same-sex parent.” (Dean, Sexuality and Modern western Culture, p, 25)

“Freud's theories of sexuality take several forms, but certain elements remain fairly constant. He argued that the child is born into a state bisexuality, an innate sexual instinct that he referred to as “polymorphous perversity.” (Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual: The Rhetoric and Power of the Gay Gene, p. 30)

“Freud theorizes male homosexuality in several ways, but he often imagines the child adopting a feminine identity.” (Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual: The Rhetoric and Power of the Gay Gene, p. 31)

“Although Freud offers alternative theories, they all play off the male child's disrupted relationship with the mother. In many cases, these theories suggest that the male homosexual adopts a feminine sexual identity, and in this process he enters into a state of arrested sexual development.” (Brookey, Reinventing the Male Homosexual: The Rhetoric and Power of the Gay Gene, p. 31)

Even still today there are those who hold to a psychoanalytical model or view of homosexuality. In doing so they continue to see homosexuality as pathological. *“Among the numerous claims supporting the pathology thesis of male homosexuality there seems to be an essential core of four basic propositions. Analysts assert that homosexual men suffer a form of developmental arrest caused*

by (1) early narcissistic fixations; (2) disturbed family relationships; (3) an underlying disturbance of male gender identity and finally, (4) pathological defenses against a biologically primary heterosexuality." (Friedman, "The Psychoanalytic Model of Male Homosexuality: A Historical and Theoretical Critique," p.511)

Friedman further goes on to write, that a psychoanalytic model is only a theory, among the other theories of homosexuality. Yet it is one that continued to be held by some.

"In this paper I have hoped to demonstrate that the analytic model of male homosexuality is a scientific paradigm with cultural origins and a historical place in the world of sex research that is not absolute." (Friedman, "The Psychoanalytic Model of Male Homosexuality: A Historical and Theoretical Critique," p.515)

"Through their contradictory logic, the early theories of male homosexuality struggled to ascertain the relationship between sex and gender. Sexologists and homosexual rights advocates both insisted and denied that homosexuals were different: if they were morally, emotionally, and (at least in appearance) physically like heterosexuals, how could doctors account for their congenital difference? And if they were not congenitally different, than how were they different (in the case of Brand and Friedlander, the most "manly" men)?" (Dean, Sexuality and Modern Western Culture p.25)

Sexology after Freud had very little new to say about homosexuality until Kinsey published his study in 1948, although homosexuals continued to be apart of the emerging modern culture. In Europe and the United States the two world wars, especially WW II was important. What they did was to bring individuals, from primarily an agriculture culture, together to fight a war. Many of these individuals who thought they were unique, now were introduced to others who were just like themselves. After fighting the wars many men remained in the large American and European cities.

"Between the 1850s and the 1930s a complex sexual community had developed in many American as well as European cities, which crossed class, racial, gender and age boundaries, and which offered a focus for identity development. Since the Second World War the expansion of these subcultures has been spectacular, with one of these unlikely heroes of this growth being the gay bar." (Weeks, Sexuality and Its Discontents, p.192)

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